

3 Pentecost - 13 June 2010 - Proper 6 C  
1 Kings 21:1-10, (11-14), 15-21a; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3  
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I have a dog named Hope. She is a terrier mixed with something else. She is a cute white dog and weighs roughly eight pounds. I adopted her about a month before I moved to seminary. She was abused in her previous home and so she was very shy. Maybe shy is not the word. On the crate at the shelter where I found her, there was a good description of her disposition. On a piece of paper taped to the cage she was in, it said, "Hi, my name is Hope. Please ask for assistance before petting me, I bite." And thus, I decided this was my dog.

When I first took Hope home I noticed that she shook a lot. I attributed that to her new environment and tried to comfort her. She continued to shake for quite a while and so I thought she might be in pain. I asked the vet and he examined her and it turned out she had an ear infection and he gave her some antibiotics and the infection cleared. She continued to shake after that and still does to this day.

I mentioned this to my mom and she told me about a dog we had when I was very young. It was also a terrier mutt of some sort. She said that he would shake all the time and usually it was his way of getting what he wanted. This could be anything; treats, attention, people food, a walk, to go outside, etc. I tested this theory out on Hope and sure enough, it was her way of making me feel sorry for her and giving her what she wants. She takes it to an extreme though. She shakes, and jumps on me. If I am lying down she will stand on me and stare at me. If I am sitting on the couch she will get on the back and stand on my shoulder like a parrot. Suffice to say, she is a very innovative dog and usually gets what she wants. On the occasion when she does not get what she wants she goes and sits in her crate and pouts.

In the Old Testament passage we see King Ahab out trying to acquire Naboth's vineyard. From the way he asked for it one could surmise that the King was used to getting what he wanted. To add insult to injury he does not want the vineyard to make it a better vineyard. He wants the vineyard in order to turn it into a vegetable garden.

Put yourself in the shoes of Naboth. This vineyard has been in your family for a long time. You have taken care of it; it is your lively hood. In some ways the vineyard is like family. Then this arrogant King waltzes in and says; "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house." Seriously, which of you would say, "ok"? Ahab was a man who was used to getting what he wants. This day it is not so. Ahab does not get what he wants and so he goes home lays on his bed and begins to pout like my dog.

I am guessing his wife has seen this attitude before because she is very direct with him and tells him to cheer up; she will get him the vineyard. Then she does a bunch of deceitful things in his name, has Naboth killed and gives Ahab the vineyard. He got what he wanted, however, it comes back to bite Ahab through the Prophet Elijah speaking God's wrath against him.

In the Gospel for today we see a Pharisee who wants to show off this eclectic Rabbi by having Jesus over to his house for dinner. I say this about the Pharisee because he did not give Jesus the hospitality generally given to a man when entering a household. The Pharisee did not greet him with a kiss, nor bathe his feet, nor anoint his head with oil. I am not sure that Jesus necessarily wanted these things, but it was simply standard manners to do these things for a guest. The scene gets further complicated by a "sinful woman," that chooses to

wash Jesus' feet with her tears and wipe them clean with her hair. This is the ultimate in hospitality. This makes Simon the Pharisee look bad, and so he is thinking to himself that Jesus is a fool for allowing this "sinful woman" to touch him. This woman shows great faith in Jesus, such that she humbles herself to the point of not caring about her own identity, but she merely wants to serve Jesus.

Jesus transitions this passage by telling the Pharisee a story about two men in debt. The one with the bigger debt canceled feels more gratitude toward the man who forgave his debt. He refers to the widow as the reason for telling His story. He says her many sins are forgiven and therefore she has the capacity to be more grateful than the Pharisee. Again it makes the Pharisee look foolish that Jesus is paying more heed to the sinful woman than the high ranking, possibly pious Pharisee. He goes so far as to say that her sins are forgiven and her faith has saved her.

The Pharisee did not get what he wanted and the woman got something she did not even know she wanted until she met Jesus. So struck with Him was she, that she lost herself and dared to go into a Pharisee's house to anoint Jesus. Sometimes not knowing what we want to ask for is not a bad thing. At least we are not asking for the wrong thing. So I ask you, what are you asking for? Are you asking for power and prestige like the Pharisee? Are you asking for money or security? Are you asking for health and wellness? Are you asking for a good retirement plan? Are you asking for a trip around the world? Are you asking for material goods? These are not necessarily bad things in and of themselves, the issue is; what are we asking for above all else? Do you know what you want most?

This begs a second question; who are you asking? Who are we asking? The woman knew who to go to, even if she did not know what to ask for. It is this blind faith that strikes me about this sinful

woman. She put all her trust in Jesus. Saint Paul does the same thing in this morning's reading in his letter to the Galatians. He says that he has been crucified with Christ and it is no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him. Once again we see someone who wanted the wrong thing; he wanted to persecute the Church. God intervened in a miraculous way and gave him what he really needed and should have wanted; salvation through Christ, an infinitely better life..

What do you want? Do you know what you want? Singer, songwriter, Jimmy Buffett wrote a lyric in his song, *Don't Chu Know*, that goes, "Indecision may or may not be my problem, I'm just not sure." If you don't know what you want, have you asked God what you should ask of Him? Have you prayed for guidance? Do we pray regularly for God's guidance in our lives? Whether it is for the biggest thing possible or something menial, we should be praying to God to guide our way. I have found that engaging in daily prayer is helpful in this aspect.

The point of the matter is that we ask God to help us in our journeys and involve Him in our daily lives. I think this is where we can learn a message from my furry little friend. My dog certainly knows to ask me for things daily so that her needs, as well as her wants will be met. She also reminds me daily to be thankful to God for all the blessings of this life. Like my dog asking me to guide her and do what is best for her, which I happily do. God is happy to do the same for us.

And so we pray, Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.